

California Department of Parks and Recreation

Initial Study and Checklist

Title of Proposal: Coyote Canyon Public Use Plan

DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- a) I find that the proposed project *could not* have a significant effect on the environment, and

A NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared ☒

- b) I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the *mitigation* measures described on an attached sheet have been added to the project.

A NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared ☐

- c) I find the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment, and

AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required ☐

Signature

Donald W. Murphy

DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
AND RECREATION

Print Name

DONALD W. MURPHY

Date

10/2/95

COYOTE CANYON PUBLIC USE PLAN

The Department of Parks and Recreation has concluded its preliminary planning for public use of Coyote Canyon in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and has identified a preferred alternative, described on page 31 of the final draft of the "Coyote Canyon Public Use Plan." Central to the plan are a number of preferred actions that will increase the quality of recreation and protect resources of the canyon. Key actions include the following:

- Permit motorized vehicle access from Lower Willows to Middle Willows;
- Permit, on a trial basis, motorized vehicle access from the northern park boundary to Upper Willows;
- Close a 3.1 mile stretch of Coyote Canyon between Upper and Middle Willows to motorized vehicles;
- Extend by 30 days the summer canyon-wide closure for all users, to June 1 through September 30;
- Continue to permit camping in the canyon, but outside the three main oases;
- Continue the canyon bottom trail for hikers, equestrians and mountain bike users through Middle and Upper Willows areas, with minor adjustments to avoid sensitive resources.

In addition to these items, the Department will take specific actions in the canyon to reduce or eliminate low level aircraft flights, control major exotic flora and fauna, increase identification and protection of prehistoric and historic resources and increase monitoring of the desert bighorn sheep.

Throughout the next five years the Department will monitor the effectiveness of the above actions geared toward improving the quality of public recreation and resource protection. Monitoring over the period will include the following: ① visitor use survey regarding impacts of plan implementation on quality of recreational experience; ② changes in streambed profile in Middle and Upper Willows where motor vehicles drove in the creek and changes in streamflow regime and channelization after vehicle exclusion and episodic storm event; ③ amount of revegetation of riparian area where motor vehicular use in past reduced cover to 0-20%; ④ changes in amphibian use of aquatic canyon bottomlands and use of Middle and Upper Willows by bighorn sheep, least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher. At the end of this period these management measures will be thoroughly evaluated. [Also, data gathered over the next five years during preparation of the Resource Element and Land Use Element of the general plan will be analyzed along with the results of the above monitoring.] If the results of the above monitoring do not demonstrate overall improved health of recreational or resource values, the Department will give serious consideration to modifying the plan to increase vehicular access in the canyon. Lack of improvement attributed to major natural events will be discounted.

September 25, 1995

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED UNDER THE SELECTED ACTION

1. **Middle Willows Road Closure Fence.** At the south, or downstream end of Middle Willows, just outside sensitive riparian habitat, a fence barrier to vehicle will be constructed across the wash from bank to bank (Figure 1). The fence will be approximately 315 feet long, 5 feet high and constructed of 4 smooth wire strands. The fence will be built according to standards established by California Department of Fish and Game designed to reduce the likelihood of injuring bighorn sheep. A three and one-half to four foot wide opening, acceptable for equestrian, hiker and mountain bike use will be installed where the trail meets the fence. The fence will have a lockable "ranch" type gate installed for emergency vehicle access. The habitat in the fence alignment consists entirely of open braided streambed with little or no aquatic or terrestrial vegetation. No perennial shrubs will be destroyed by construction. The creek flows on the surface here most of the year.

Construction will consist of driving steel posts, building the gate and stringing the wire, predominantly by hand. The site will be accessed by truck and a portable power generator will be used if necessary. Posts and a sign may be mounted in large granite boulders found in place along the fence alignment by drilling into the rock and securing posts with concrete or glue. This will be done in order to make the fence and signs as permanent as possible. Vandalism and necessary repeated repairs of the barrier and signs are expected.

The fence was located at this site for two reasons. First, the fence alignment is immediately downstream from a significant cultural site. Putting the fence in this location creates a trailhead away from a sensitive cultural resources that have received significant impact in the past from vehicles, camping and illegal ground fires. Locating the fence any further upstream would encourage camping and vehicle use of this convenient, out-of-the-wash site. Measures will be taken to further protect the cultural site by eliminating and blocking off existing unauthorized roads that give access to the site. Second, the designated fence location protects the southern limit of sensitive riparian habitat in Middle Willows at a reasonably narrow section of the canyon. The relatively flat, open wash area, immediately adjacent and downstream from the barrier, and on either side of the road, will be designated as a trailhead and will provide adequate trailhead parking.

2. **Upper Willows Road Closure Fence.** A fence barrier to vehicles will be constructed at the upstream end of Upper Willows (Figure 1). The fence will extend approximately 320 feet long from bank to bank across the wash. Materials and construction will be the same as noted above for the Middle Willow fence. The habitat at the site is open braided stream with surface flows occurring most of the year. Aquatic vegetation is virtually nonexistent and terrestrial plants are generally sparse. The fence traverses about 80 feet of moderately dense mesquite thicket at the north end. No perennial shrubs will be destroyed or impacted in any significant way to complete the fence.

The alignment shown in Figure 1 was chosen because it is located as close as possible to the upstream limit of sensitive riparian habitat, while still providing access to Bailey's Cabin. Trailhead parking is available along the road adjacent to the fence.

3. **Equestrian, Hiking and Mountain Bike Trails Through the Middle and Upper Willows Section.** Following the detailed Trail Management Guidelines set forth in Appendix A, Coyote Canyon Public Use Plan, Final Draft, trails through the oases will be, where necessary, realigned within the stream bottom, to avoid sensitive resources. This does not require any major relocation of the route but will be done similar to way the trail through Lower Willows was adjusted to go around important riparian stands and to avoid the creek where possible.

Three to 3.5 acres of former motorized vehicle road through the main canyon bottom will be eliminated, 1.5 acres or more of which is potential riparian habitat within the limits of the two oases. Approximately one-fourth of the former road, in area, will be required to accommodate the trail-only alignment, resulting in a net gain in undisturbed habitat of 2.3 to 2.6 acres. The top priority will be to avoid aligning the trail in the creek. Less than .05 acres of vegetated riparian habitat is expected to be cut through for the new alignment, with trimming of vegetation 4-5 feet wide being needed through a few sections to take the trail away from more sensitive natural or cultural habitat. Cut and fill of sandy sediment may be necessary in a few short segments, no to exceed a total of 200 feet in length or two feet in depth. no culverts or other structures will be installed. The estimated total length of trail within the 3.1 mile closure segment which needs to be realigned is 1.5 miles. The trail will be about four to five feet wide. Sections of former road will either be narrowed down from their current vehicle road width to horse trail width, or they will be abandoned. Unnecessary multiple trails and roads in the 3.1 mile segment will be consolidated into one optimum alignment. Where roads or trail segments are to be eliminated they will be blocked off and or blocked off using available rocks, branches etc. in order to discourage use.

4. **Camping Restrictions.** Camping will be eliminated from Lower, Middle and Upper Willows (Figure 1). The limits of open camping will be marked by signs at the upstream and downstream end of all three oases. Camping is prohibited anywhere along the length and width of the oases. At Middle Willows, 1.0 miles length of oases is closed and at Upper Willows, 0.4 miles is closed to camping. Side areas close by the oases, such as Yucca Flat near Middle Willows and Bailey's Cabin at Upper Willows, will remain open to camping, allowing the visitor convenient access to the comfort, water and nature viewing opportunities provided at the oases.
5. **Mountain Bikes.** This plan does not change current mountain bike use in Coyote Canyon. Mountain bikes will have through canyon access along the trail in the main canyon into Middle and Upper Willows and north. Current bike use in the lower canyon will remain unchanged. Access will be via the bypass road with no mountain bikes permitted in Lower Willows. Lower Willows is a Wilderness Area, where all mechanized vehicles are

prohibited. In addition, mountain bike policy in Colorado Desert District is that bikes are not permitted on single track trails(non-motorized vehicle roads). Once the road is closed along the 3.1 mile segment, an exception will be made in this case to provide use of the new trail because no alternative exists for access to the north around Middle and Upper Willows.

6. **Signs.** The following new signs will be installed:

- a. At the top of the Turkey Track, a 2ft x 4ft information sign will be placed along the road to inform drivers that the road dead ends at Upper Willows and of the extreme conditions ahead. Particular attention will be given to the difficulty encountered in returning up the steep section of Turkey Track.
- b. Two signs will be placed in the lower canyon announcing that the road dead ends at Middle Willows and no longer goes all the way through the canyon. One sign will be located at the end of the paved portion of DiGiorgio Rd., where Coyote Canyon is accessed from the south. The same type of sign will be placed at the Lower Willows closure gate to insure that all drivers are informed of the situation.
- c. "Camping Prohibited In The Oases " signs will be placed at strategic locations at the upper and lower end of each of the three oases. Where there are fence barriers, the signs will be placed at the fence, otherwise they will be where the trail enters and exits each oases.
- d. "Sensitive Habitat" interpretive panels will be placed at the upper and lower end of each oases, at the second creek crossing trailhead parking area and at the horse camp.

California Department of Parks and Recreation

ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

State Clearinghouse

PROJECT LOCATION: Coyote Canyon, Borrego Springs San Diego & Riverside
City County

PROJECT ADDRESS: Colorado Desert District, California State Parks, 200 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT: See the following pages for summary of Coyote Canyon Public Use Plan and Development Activities to be Implemented Under the Selected Action.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

(As required by CEQA, an explanation of all "yes" and "maybe" answers is provided along with this checklist.)

		Yes	Maybe	No
I. EARTH.	<i>Will the proposal result in:</i>			
a.	Unstable earth conditions or in changes in geologic substructures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b.	Disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcovering of the soil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c.	Change in topography or ground surface relief features?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.	The destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e.	Any increase in wind or water erosion of soils, either on or off the site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f.	Changes in deposition or erosion of beachsands, or changes in situation, deposition or erosion which may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed of the ocean or any bay, inlet or lake?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g.	Exposure of people or property to geologic hazards, such as earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, ground failure, or similar hazards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

II. AIR. Will the proposal result in:

- | | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) | Substantial air emissions or deterioration of ambient air quality? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | The creation of objectionable odors? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) | Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

III. WATER. Will the proposal result in:

- | | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) | Changes in currents, or the course or direction of water movements, in either marine or freshwaters? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | Changes in absorption rates, drainage patterns, or the rate and amount of surface runoff? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) | Alterations to the course or flow of flood waters? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) | Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) | Discharge into surface waters, or in any alteration of surface water quality, including, but not limited to, temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) | Alteration of the direction or rate of flow of ground waters? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g) | Change in the quantity of ground waters, either through direct additions or withdrawals, or through interception of an aquifer by cuts or excavations? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| h) | Substantial reduction in the amount of water otherwise available for public water supplies? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| i) | Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding or tidal waves? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

IV. PLANT LIFE. Will the proposal result in:

- | | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) | Change in the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants?) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species of plants? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

c) Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species? ☐ ☐ ☒

d) Reduction in acreage of any agricultural crop? ☐ ☐ ☒

V. ANIMAL LIFE. Will the proposal result in:

a) Change in the diversity of species, or numbers of any species of animals (birds, lands animals, including reptiles, fish and shellfish, benthic organisms or insects)? ☐ ☒ ☐

b) Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare, or endangered species or animals? ☐ ☐ ☒

c) Introduction of new species of animals into an area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of animals? ☐ ☐ ☒

d) Deterioration of existing fish or wildlife habitat? ☐ ☐ ☒

VI. NOISE. Will the proposal result in:

a) Increase in existing noise levels? ☐ ☐ ☒

b) Exposure of people to severe noise levels? ☐ ☐ ☒

VII. LIGHT and GLARE. Will the proposal result in:

a) Produce new light or glare? ☐ ☐ ☒

VIII. LAND USE. Will the proposal result in:

a) Substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area? ☒ ☐ ☐

IX. NATURAL RESOURCES. Will the proposal result in:

a) Increase in the rate of use of any natural resources? ☐ ☐ ☒

X. RISK OF UPSET. Will the proposal result in:

a) A risk of an explosion or the release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to: oil, pesticides, chemicals or radiation) in the event of an accident or upset conditions? ☐ ☐ ☒

b) Possible interference with an emergency response plan or an emergency evacuation plan? ☐ ☐ ☒

XI. POPULATION. *Will the proposal:*

- a) Alter the location, distribution, density or growth rate of the human population of an area? ☐ ☐ ☒

XII. HOUSING. *Will the proposal:*

- a) Affect existing housing, or create a demand for additional housing? ☐ ☐ ☒

XIII. TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION. *Will the proposal result in:*

- a) Generation of substantial additional vehicular movement? ☐ ☐ ☒
b) Effects on existing parking facilities, or demand for new parking? ☐ ☐ ☒
c) Substantial impact upon existing transportation systems? ☐ ☐ ☒
d) Alterations to present patterns of circulation or movement of people and/or goods? ☒ ☐ ☐
e) Alterations to waterborne, rail or air traffic? ☐ ☐ ☒
f) Increase in traffic hazards to motor vehicles, bicyclists, or pedestrians? ☐ ☐ ☒

XIV. PUBLIC SERVICES. *Will the proposal have an effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas:*

- a) Fire protection? ☐ ☐ ☒
b) Police protection? ☐ ☐ ☒
c) Schools? ☐ ☐ ☒
d) Parks or other recreation facilities? ☐ ☒ ☐
e) Maintenance of public facilities, including roads? ☐ ☒ ☐
f) Other governmental services? ☐ ☐ ☒

XV. ENERGY. *Will the proposal result in:*

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Use of substantial amount of fuel or energy? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Substantial increase in demand upon existing sources of energy,
or require the development of new sources of energy? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

XVI. UTILITIES and SERVICES SYSTEMS. *Will the proposal result in a need
for new systems, or substantial alterations to the following utilities:*

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Power or natural gas? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Communications systems? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Water? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Sewer or septic tanks? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Storm or septic tanks? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Solid waste and disposal? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

XVII. HUMAN HEALTH. *Will the proposal result in:*

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Creation of any health hazard or potential health hazard
(excluding mental health)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Exposure of people to potential health hazards? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

XVIII. PLAN CONFORMANCE. *Will the proposal result in:*

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Conflict with the State Park System's Unit's adopted General Plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Conflict with the Department of Park and Recreation's Resource
Management Directives? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Conflicts with any other applicable adopted plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

XIX. AESTHETICS. *Will the proposal result in:*

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) The obstruction of any scenic vista or view open to the public? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b) The creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public
view? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

XX. RECREATION. Will the proposal result in:

- Y a) Impact upon the quality or quantity of existing recreation opportunities? ☒ ☐ ☐

XXI. CULTURAL RESOURCES. Will the proposal:

- a) Result in the alteration of or the destruction of a prehistoric or historic building, structure, or object? ☐ ☐ ☒
- b) Result in adverse physical or aesthetic effects to a prehistoric or historic building, structure, or object? ☐ ☐ ☒
- 79 c) Have the potential to cause a physical change which would affect unique ethnic cultural values? ☐ ☒ ☐
- d) Restrict existing religious or sacred uses within the potential impact area? ☐ ☐ ☒

XXII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE.

- a) **Potential to degrade.** Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat or a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory? ☐ ☐ ☒
- b) **Short-term.** Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively, brief, definitive period of time. Long-term impacts will endure well into the future.) ☐ ☐ ☒
- c) **Cumulative.** Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project may impact on two or more separate resources where the impact on each resource is relatively small, but where the effect on the total of those impacts on the environment is significant.) ☐ ☐ ☒
- d) **Substantial adverse.** Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly? ☐ ☐ ☒

XXIII. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION.

(An explanation of all "yes" and "maybe" responses)

- I c. Removal of motorized vehicle use over 3.1 miles of Coyote Canyon Road, much of it through Coyote Creek will stop the downward cutting of the road surface from vehicle activity. Soil erosion and sedimentation of the creek is expected to be reduced.
- I f. The portion of the creek that the road now passes directly through will be subject to less erosion once traffic is eliminated.
- III a. The course of the creek may naturally fluctuate and take different alignments where motorized traffic is eliminated due to the reduced channelization and down cutting that vehicle traffic causes.
- III b. Where motorized vehicle use is eliminated, vegetation cover is expected to increase and erosion is expected to decrease. These factors may result in a slower runoff rate and increased absorption.
- III c. Same as IIIa.
- III d. As a result of the effects noted in III b., there may, on the average be more surface water flowing in the creek.
- III e. The reduction in motorized vehicle use is expected to result in lower turbidity in the creek and lower petroleum pollution levels.
- III f. Minor alteration of ground water may occur as a result of the effects noted in III. Any ground water change is expected to be a positive one - with increased groundwater recharge and lower pollutant levels.
- IV a. The distribution and diversity of aquatic plants, riparian trees, riparian shrubs and forbs is expected to increase where motorized vehicle traffic is eliminated.
- V a. Elimination of motorized vehicles through the creek is expected to result in increases in diversity and number of aquatic invertebrates, amphibians and birds in the riparian zone.
- VIII a. Elimination of motorized vehicle use over 3.1 miles of road and improved passive recreation in the Wilderness Area will alter current land use.
- XIII d. Circulation of people using motorized vehicles will be eliminated over a portion of the plan area.

- XIV d. Motorized vehicle recreation will be eliminated along a portion of Coyote Canyon Road, pedestrian, equestrian and mountain bike use may increase or remain the same. The user group potentially affected includes those that want to experience the challenge of completing the entire canyon drive-through; these users are relatively few in numbers. Approximately 85% of the current vehicle access in the canyon (nearly 23 miles) will continue to be available. The Department still permits motorized vehicles on approximately 490 miles of unimproved corridors, of which about 75 miles are considered challenging.
- XIV e. Closure of the roadway through the willows areas will reduce the road maintenance required of the Department. Maintenance of the fencelines, gates and interpretative and roadway signage will be an increased maintenance need and will vary with incidences of vandalism.
- XX a. Recreation opportunities will be reduced for a small percentage of the user groups visiting Coyote Canyon, specifically motorized vehicle users that are interested in the through route through the canyon. Other user groups are expected to experience an increased recreational experience due to the improved condition of the canyon and the reduced vehicular noise in high use visitor areas.
- XXI c. Reduced motorized vehicle travel within the willow oases is expected to reduce direct impacts to natural resources from traffic and indirect impacts to cultural resources along the present roadway from vandalism.

XXIV. DISCUSSION OF LAND USE IMPACTS.

(An examination of whether the project would be consistent with existing zoning, plans, and other applicable land use controls.)

The closing of approximately 3.1 miles of roadway through Coyote Creek will eliminate the through vehicular route utilized by a relatively small porportion of the visiting public. The result of this action is to increase the protection of natural, physical and cultural resources present within the vicinity and directly adjacent to the current use. This action is consistent with state and federal laws and policies aimed at preserving our natural heritage. Further, the project is consistent with all California Department of Parks and Recreation land use, general planning and resource management guidelines. Anza Borrego Desert State Park does not presently have a General Plan (GP). The GP process is underway and completion is expected in a minimum of 4 years.

COYOTE CANYON PUBLIC USE PLAN

ANZA-BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK
COLORADO DESERT DISTRICT
CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

September 1995

FINAL DRAFT

SUMMARY

California State Parks is updating public use policies for Coyote Canyon, a portion of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. Several changes will be made in order to improve outdoor recreation opportunities, to comply with state and federal laws for the protection of sensitive resources and to improve resource protection efforts. Recreation use of the canyon has grown dramatically over the years. Areas of particular concern, as a result of their unique nature as well as observed impacts from visitor use, are the sensitive streamside oases known as Lower, Middle and Upper Willows. Currently, the canyon is open to through traffic for hikers, equestrians and motorized vehicles from September 16th to June 14th and is closed the remainder of the year recognizing the need to provide undisturbed access to watering areas for wildlife. This document summarizes the current conditions in Coyote Creek, the laws that govern resource management of state lands and the management actions proposed for Coyote Creek to ensure the maintenance of sensitive resources while providing for recreational use.

Alternative land use actions considered in the development of this management approach included but were not limited to: 1) no significant management changes/status quo, 2) extend the closure period for motorized vehicles and mountain bikes only; camping outside of the oases, 3) extend the closure period for all users; camping outside of oases, 4a) establish a closure area - maintain trail access through canyon, 4b) eliminate motorized vehicle access through the Willows but maintain vehicle access above Upper Willows to the northern boundary of the park, 5) reroute motorized vehicles and mountain bikes around sensitive areas, 6) close entire canyon to motorized vehicles; allow camping outside of oases, 7) close the entire canyon to all public uses, 8) realign hiking and equestrian trails. In addition, formal guidelines for camping, road and trail guidelines are recommended.

Two public meetings to discuss these alternatives were held on February 24 and 27, 1995 in San Diego and Borrego Springs, respectively. Based on input from the public meetings, written comments, examination of all available information, and recommendations from other agencies, the Department has selected a preferred course of action. Procedures for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are now being taken.

The selected action is discussed in Section V of this document, and includes implementation of the following: (1) the roadway through Middle and Upper Willows will be closed to motorized vehicles with through access provided along a formal trail for equestrian use, hiking and bicycles; (2) the road from the northern boundary of the park down to Upper Willows will, on a trial basis,

remain open to motorized vehicles; (3) the roadway from the south extending to the lower end of Middle Willows will also remain open to motorized vehicles; (4) the seasonal closure for all users will be extended by 30 days to June 1 through September 30; (5) camping will be prohibited in the three oases; and (6) military officials will be contacted to address the issue of low elevation aircraft flyover violations in the Wilderness Area.

California State Parks, Colorado Desert District, 200 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs, CA 92004, Phone: (619) 767-5311

COYOTE CANYON PUBLIC USE PLAN

FINAL DRAFT
September 1995

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TABLE 1. SENSITIVE SPECIES RECORDED IN COYOTE CANYON, ANZA-BORREGO DESERT STATE PARK, CALIFORNIA, 2 PAGES.

FIGURE 1. MAP OF COYOTE CANYON PUBLIC USE PLAN AREA
FIGURE 2. TRAIL AND ROAD MAP OF LOWER WILLOWS
FIGURE 3. TRAIL AND ROAD MAP OF MIDDLE WILLOWS
FIGURE 4. TRAIL AND ROAD MAP OF UPPER WILLOWS
FIGURE 5. TRAIL AND ROAD MAP OF NORTH BOUNDARY